

## **DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF EIS**

**Description of Proposal:** This notice advises the public that the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) intends to gather information to assist in the review and possible amendment of the policies in DNR's 1992 Forest Resource Plan and for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**Need and Purpose of the Proposal:** A review and update of the Forest Resource Plan is needed to keep pace with the changes shaping forest land management today. When adopted in 1992, the Forest Resource Plan was envisioned as a 10-year document. In 2002, the policies in the Plan were extended for an additional three-year period so that the DNR could complete a Western Washington sustainable harvest calculation, the first step to revising the 1992 Forest Resource Plan. The revision of the Forest Resource Plan will position the DNR to effectively and sustainably manage the trust's forest land for the trust beneficiaries and the people of Washington, into the future.

The purpose of the plan is "to conserve and enhance the natural resources of state forest land [including federally granted forest lands] while producing long-term, stable income from these lands." (See page 13 of the 1992 Forest Resource Plan.)

**Background Information:** The DNR has unique obligations in managing lands for the State of Washington. The legislature has designated DNR as manager of federally granted forest lands, state forest lands (formerly known as Forest Board lands) and other lands. The state acquired the federally granted lands under the Enabling Act and State Constitution when Washington became a state in 1889. The state forest lands were acquired over time from Western Washington counties by way of tax foreclosures and tax delinquencies, as well as through purchases and gifts or other sources.

DNR manages approximately 2.1 million acres of forested state lands in Washington. Most of these lands are held in trust for the benefit of various specific entities, primarily schools and counties, which are the trust beneficiaries. The fiduciary aspect of trust management requires DNR to manage these lands in a manner that produces long-term income for these beneficiaries. In doing so, DNR complies with the rules of the Forest Practices Act, other state and federal laws and agreements including the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), and Board of Natural Resources' policy.

The Board of Natural Resources (BNR) is the policy-making body for state trust lands and is composed of six members: the Commissioner of Public Lands; the Governor (or a designated representative); the Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Washington State University; the Dean of the College of Forest Resources, University of Washington; and an elected representative from a county that contains state forest lands (formerly known as Forest Board lands).

The policies in the Forest Resource Plan form the core of the BNR's policy direction to the DNR regarding the management of Washington's forested trust lands.

**Management Objectives:** In reviewing, updating, and developing new policies, the DNR and the BNR will:

1. Meet all federal and state legal mandates, including the trust mandate and the contractual obligations of the Habitat Conservation Plan.
2. Incorporate policies adopted by the BNR as part of the 2004 sustainable harvest calculation for Western Washington, and articulated in BNR Resolution 1110 (available at: <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/fr/sales/sustainharvest/030204resolution1110.pdf>; and <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/fr/sales/sustainharvest/021704doc1.pdf>).
3. Promote active and sustainable management of as much of the forested land base as allowed by law (including the HCP) and utilize forestry practices to a) best meet trust fiduciary responsibilities, b) maintain a diverse and productive healthy forest system, c) protect sensitive areas and habitats, and d) provide social and cultural benefits compatible with a, b, and c above.
4. Promote innovative and creative ways to capture existing or future timber and non-timber economic opportunities, compatible with fiduciary responsibilities.
5. Identify forested trust lands that provide special ecological, social, or cultural benefits (beyond direct financial returns to the beneficiaries) that conflict with active management, and protect such areas through creative partnerships and funding mechanisms compatible with fiduciary responsibilities.
6. Include a program that provides for monitoring and periodic reporting to the BNR on the implementation of BNR-approved policies and outcomes. Monitoring will also help identify needed changes in policies and DNR practices to better meet trust and BNR objectives.
7. Taken collectively, policies should communicate the role of managed state forested trust lands in Washington State, and the benefits these forests provide to the trust beneficiaries and the people of Washington.
8. Provide for efficient and cost-effective application, implementation and ease of understanding of BNR policy regarding the acquisition, management, and disposition of all state forested trust lands and resources, and promote alignment of implementation tools (planning, operational tools, and public involvement) with policy.
9. Provide a flexible framework within which DNR may use professional judgment, best available science and sound field forestry to achieve excellence in public stewardship.

**Proponent:** Washington State Department of Natural Resources

**Location of Proposal:** All state forested trust lands in the State of Washington

**Lead Agency:** Washington State Department of Natural Resources

**EIS Required:** The Lead Agency recognizes the potential for changes to the Forest Resource Plan policies covering DNR-managed forested trust lands in Washington may have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Although it has not been concluded that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required by RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c), an EIS will be prepared to analyze the potential adverse impacts of this proposal.

The lead agency has identified the following areas for discussion in the EIS:

- Management Objectives
- Four major policy categories: Economic Performance, Ecological Protection and Enhancement, Social and Cultural Benefits, Creating Sustainable Forests; and related policies.

**Scoping Notice Invites Comments:** This notice is being furnished consistent with SEPA rules (WAC 197-11-408) to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of potentially significant environmental issues to be addressed in the EIS. The purpose of scoping is to narrow the scope of the EIS to the probable significant adverse impacts and reasonable alternatives, including mitigation measures and to eliminate from detailed study those issues and impacts that are not significant.

The DNR has drafted preliminary management objectives listed above for meeting the need and purpose of this proposal. The management objectives are intended to focus ideas and solicit input from the public and other stakeholders on key policy issue areas to be included in the EIS and to guide the review, update and development of the BNR policies that govern the management, disposition and acquisition of state forested trust lands.

The management objectives will shape the policy alternatives and will be used to evaluate whether a policy alternative or mitigation measure is reasonable for consideration. They will continue to steer and provide the basis for mid-course corrections, as the final scope of this EIS is determined. And finally they will be used by the BNR to evaluate the merits of the set of updated, revised or new policies.

In conjunction with identifying reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures and prior to the issuance of a draft environmental impact statement, the management objectives may be amended based on what DNR learns through this scoping process.

Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. Interested parties may comment on alternatives, major policy categories mitigation measures, and probable significant adverse impacts. There are no other agencies of jurisdiction for setting policy on state forest trust lands. Therefore, there are no other licenses or approvals required for this proposal.

**Due Date for Scoping Comments:** All comments on the proposal must be received in writing (via regular mail, fax or electronic mail) and must be received by the SEPA Center no later than 5:00 PM on Monday, April 12, 2004.

**Comments Should Be Submitted To:**

**Address:** Washington State Department of Natural Resources SEPA Center  
1111 Washington Street SE  
P.O. Box 47015  
Olympia, WA 98504-7015  
**Phone:** (360) 902-1634  
**Fax:** (360) 902-1789  
**Email:** sepacenter@wadnr.gov

**Notice of Public Workshops:** Public scoping workshops will be held at the following locations and dates. All public workshops are scheduled from 6:00 – 8:00 PM.

**Monday, March 22 – Mount Vernon**

Best Western CottonTree Inn & Convention Center, Fidalgo Room  
2300 Market Street  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

**Tuesday, March 23 – Seattle**

Seattle Vocational Institute, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 401  
2120 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA 98144

**Wednesday, March 24 – Port Angeles**

Peninsula College, Little Theatre  
1502 East Lauridsen Blvd.  
Port Angeles, WA 98362

**Thursday, March 25 – Longview**

Cowlitz County PUD  
961-12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Longview, WA 98632

**Tuesday, March 30 – Lacey**

Lacey Community Center at Woodland Creek Community Park  
6729 Pacific Avenue SE  
Lacey, WA 98509-3400

**Wednesday, March 31 – Ellensburg**

Central Washington University, Black Hall, Room 151  
400 E University Way  
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7501

**Thursday, April 1 – Spokane**

Hilton Garden Inn, Granite Room  
9015 West Highway 2  
Spokane, WA 99224

**Response to Comments:** A summary of scoping comments will be prepared and made available to the public.

**Responsible Official:** Kit Metlen

**Position/Title:** Division Manager, Asset Management and Protection Division

**Phone:** (360) 902-1611

**Address:** Washington State Department of Natural Resources, 1111 Washington Street SE, PO Box 47016, Olympia, WA 98504-7016.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_